

Yellowstone Conference United Methodist Church

Reverend Su DeBree - District Superintendent of the Western Mountains
1106 Wilder Ave. Helena, MT 59601

SENATE JUDICIARY

EXHIBIT NO. 7
DATE 2/4/09

BILL NO. SR236

January 8, 2009

Dear Legislators,

I am writing this letter in support of replacing the death penalty in Montana with the sentence of life without the possibility of parole. This comes from my experience of losing a daughter to domestic violence as well as sharing with you the official stand of the United Methodist Church.

Every four years United Methodists gather approximately a thousand lay and clergy delegates for a world-wide General Conference to update and revise our *Book of Discipline* and *Book of Resolutions*. These living documents provide spiritual, administrative and legislative guidelines for our work together in local congregations and around the world. This year I was fortunate to represent Montana at that conference.

The stand against the death penalty which we have held for many years was again affirmed. A copy of that position is attached for your reference.


Simple economics comparing the cost of trying capital punishment cases to the cost of life in prison make an argument for discontinuing the death penalty for the state's budget.

But my deepest concern is that the sanctioning by our government of the use of death to bring justice simply raises the level of acceptable violence in society as a whole. This becomes our model for resolving disputes and perceived injustices.

My life long opposition to the death penalty was tested when my first born daughter was killed. I prayed through deep despair, anger and grief, and my faith was turned inside out. Obsession for vengeance would have destroyed my life as well as hers. Justice for me demands honest and thorough seeking of truth, acknowledgement of full realities, a long and complex search for forgiveness, and a trust in God's larger grace for us all. Life without the possibility of parole gives a person who has killed another a life time to face the consequences of his or her actions and the opportunity to work through that same process.

Thank you for your prayerful consideration of this issue.

Sincerely,



The Reverend Susan K. DeBree
District Superintendent of the Western Mountains
Yellowstone Conference of the United Methodist Church

